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REDTOP (*Agrostis alba*).

Redtop is the only grass of much prominence as a hay plant among the many grasses belonging to the genus *Agrostis*. It was early introduced into the American Colonies. This grass has been known under many common names, such as whitetop, florin, white bent, and herd's grass. As these names belong more properly to other grasses, all of them should be dropped and the term redtop, by which it is most commonly known, used exclusively. It is a perennial grass, with a creeping habit of growth, which makes a coarse, loose turf. It matures at about the same time as timothy. The leaves are about one-fourth of an inch wide, and the stems small and wiry. The hay is inclined to be tough and is generally unpopular on the market.

VALUE.

No grass will grow under a greater variety of conditions than redtop. It is the best wet-land grass among the tame species. It will grow on soils so deficient in lime that most other grasses fail. It is strongly drought resistant and is often used for holding banks to prevent erosion. Redtop is second only to bluegrass as a pasture plant in the northeastern part of the country. It is a vigorous grower and will serve in a short time where a turf is desired. It will thrive from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and from New York to California. Though often used in lawn mixtures, its use by itself for that purpose is not to be recommended. The turf is unsightly after the first year, and it tends to keep out more desirable species. It will add to the yield of a timothy and clover hay crop, but is considered objectionable by buyers of market hay.

USES.

The chief uses of this grass are (1) as a wet-land or sour-land hay crop; (2) as a part of pasture mixtures under humid conditions,

especially on soils other than limestone; (3) as a soil binder; and (4) as an ingredient in all hay mixtures which are to be fed at home.

It may be used for lawn purposes, especially on poor soils when the finer species of *Agrostis* can not be obtained. It is not a competitor of bluegrass for lawns, as the latter should be used on fertile limestone soils. Redtop is a valuable grass when used for the purposes mentioned.

SEED.

Most of the seed of redtop is produced in southern Illinois. The seed is smaller than that of any other commercial grass, and for that reason should be comparatively free from impurities, as it is easily separated from other seeds by screening. It is sold in two grades, known as "chaffy" and "re-cleaned." The latter should be purchased, as it is more economical and there is less danger of its containing noxious weed seeds. Redtop seed weighs about 14 pounds to the bushel in the chaff, while the re-cleaned seed should weigh about 36 pounds.

SOILS AND CLIMATE.

Redtop is not only tolerant of a sour soil, but seems to prefer a soil deficient in lime. It grows to perfection in the part of southern Illinois known locally as "Egypt," where many soils are very "sour" and poorly drained, with impervious hardpan subsoils. In New England it is the principal hay plant that is seeded, but it is frequently crowded out of meadows by quack-grass and Rhode Island bent. As previously stated, it is not particular in regard to climatic conditions, but thrives best with an abundance of moisture. Lands which are too wet for redtop are unsuited for nearly all other tame grasses.

CULTURE.

On account of its small seed redtop should have a fine, mellow seed bed, and care should be taken to prevent covering it too deeply in the soil. It may be seeded either in early spring or late summer. When seeded alone 10 pounds of good seed to the acre will insure a stand. From 4 to 5 pounds are sufficient when used with other grasses for hay, and 2 to 3 pounds are enough to use in pasture mixtures, as it spreads quite readily under favorable conditions.

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